

# N U T R I T I O N FACT SHEET

## ❑ READING TO CHILDREN

**R**eading aloud is a wonderful way for parents and children to interact. Children love to hear stories and participate in reading. Even infants enjoy reading books with parents. Besides the quality time together, reading prepares children for school and can teach them a great deal about the world. It is also a great way to teach children about nutrition. This fact sheet covers tips on selecting books, reading them and activities to do after reading to children.

### SELECTING BOOKS

Books for children should meet the needs of their age group. Books for infants or toddlers have thick pages, few words, and colorful, interesting pictures. Often, they allow the child to interact with the book, such as patting the bunny's tail. Books for older children should have a good story and illustrations.

Children like books with phrases they can repeat as the book is read. Books with rhymes, songs or chants allow the child to interact during reading. This chance to "read along" means a lot to children. Also, remember that unlike adults, children enjoy hearing the same book several times. For them, repetition makes it better.

Look for books that give the child positive role models and build self-esteem. Try to select books that are multicultural. Children should read books with characters similar to themselves as well as books with characters different from themselves. If possible, choose books in the different languages spoken in your clinic. Nutrition books that include counting or the alphabet are also good choices. Remember, you must tie the book to a nutritional message if it is to count as a WIC nutrition education lesson.

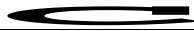
### READING TO CHILDREN

Reading time should allow the child to interact with the book and the reader. Start by telling who the author is or who illustrated it. Talk about the cover of the book or, after reading the title, ask the children what they think the book will be about.

As you read, use a lively tone of voice or different voices for the characters. Ask children to repeat phrases, act out the book, and participate in the reading. Talk about the pictures as you read, and ask open-ended questions like "What do you think will happen next?" or "Why did the bear do this?" to initiate discussion. Also, use children's questions as a signal to stop and discuss what is on their minds. Connect the book to the child's world as much as possible. If someone in the book has on a red shirt, ask the children if any of them has on a red shirt. If the book's characters are eating, ask the children what they eat.

### AFTER READING THE BOOK

Activities after reading are very important in making the book relevant for children. Doing activities both in class and later at home with parents will make the experience of reading



about nutrition more meaningful to children. The activities should relate to some aspect of the children's lives and expand on the concepts in the book.

When selecting activities, remember that they must be appropriate for the child's age and developmental level. Here are some ideas:

■ **Coloring:**

Give children a blank piece of paper and crayons or colored markers. Ask them to draw their favorite foods, draw themselves doing an activity, or illustrate some part of the book. (Variations include making a drawing into a placemat by stretching clear plastic wrap over it, or coloring on paper plates.) Children can use torn scraps of colored paper to make a collage instead of a drawing.

□ **Growth:**

Show pictures of children from infancy on. Ask how eating helps children grow and which healthy foods the child likes. Encourage parents to do this at home with pictures of their own children.

■ **Cooking:**

Help the child make simple food such as pudding, sandwiches, or burritos. Scrambled eggs are also easy to make. As you use the egg, show the children the shell, white, and yolk.

■ **Growing plants:**

Soak uncooked lima beans in water overnight. In the morning, carefully open one seed and find the baby plant inside. Poke a pencil-size hole in the bottom of a disposable cup. Fill the cup with dirt and plant several of the seeds inside. Give the plant sunlight and water, then watch it grow.

■ **Their bodies:**

Let children trace their hands on a sheet of paper. Then have them feel their bones under their skin. Ask them to draw what their bones look like in their hands. Or, trace the child's outline as he or she lies on a piece of butcher paper. Let children color their favorite foods inside the drawing or paste magazine pictures of their favorite foods inside.

□ **Favorite Foods:**

Pick one meal such as breakfast or lunch. Ask the children what their favorite food is for that meal.

Ask if everyone eats the same thing. Let them know that there is not just one way to eat well.

□ **Games:**

Play "fruit and vegetable." Let each child pick a picture of a fruit or vegetable. Ask the children to decide if they are holding a fruit or a vegetable. Let all of the children with pictures of fruits go to one side of the room and all of the children with vegetable pictures go to the other side. Then let the children trade pictures, and do the game again.

■ **Pretending:**

After reading a book about growing vegetables, let the children pretend to be farmers. Give them small rakes, hoes, shovels, empty packets of seeds, and baskets for harvesting. Let them pretend to plant the "seeds," watch them grow, and then pick the plants.

## OTHER BENEFITS OF READING

Reading is an enjoyable way to teach preschool children about nutrition. At the same time, it can meet some of the other needs that clients have expressed for parenting skills. It is one way WIC staff can model parenting. The parents who are in the room during the class are learning how to read to their children while nutrition is taught.

Remember, parents do not have to be literate to participate in reading. Parents who have difficulty reading should be encouraged to check out books. Spending time looking at the pictures in the book with their child and retelling the story in their own words will encourage reading in their children.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Watch the videotape, "Parents, Kids and Books," from KERA/KDTN. The tape shows parents reading to children and demonstrates skills that will be useful both for WIC staff and parents. It is available through the TDH Audiovisual Library, 1100 W. 49th St., Austin, TX 78756.